

A "Grandfather Todd of Old Cape Cod" Christmas Story to Be Read Aloud to All Children

Mrs. Santa Claus and the Lonely Child

By Joseph E. Hanson

THE WHITE snow-flurries were sweeping across Cape Cod Bay one evening. The wind was whistling and moaning and it was very cold. Before a blazing fire of birch logs in the "cranberry goose" cottage, Grandfather Todd was warming his hands. The two children were seated at his feet.



Three bayberry candles, sweetly scented, were burning brightly on a cherrywood table, and an old ship's clock, which had come all the way from China, had just chimed the hour of six.

"Look," said Grandfather Todd, "This reminds me of the Christmas time long ago, when Mrs. Santa Claus came down to Cape Cod to help a lonely child." At the children listened, Grandfather Todd began his story.

I suppose you did not know, children, that good old Santa Claus has a wife. Indeed, he does. Of course you never heard much about Mrs. Santa Claus, because she always stays home and takes care of the house.

There are two generous people live in a snow-kingdom up at the North Pole. Far, far away from the rest of Cape Cod, as you remember, the Pilgrim Fathers landed many years ago. Santa's house is a lovely place where all the workshops are made of blue crystal ice, clear and bright like a starry night.

Mrs. Santa is as round and jolly as Santa himself. She has the bluest eyes and the whitest hair, and her cheeks are as red as the God apples.

But her clothes, instead of being red like Santa's, are blue and white, trimmed with gold braid, and sprinkled with tiny stars. And, because it is so cold outdoors in this magic land, of ice and snow, she always wears red seal-skin boots, and mittens to match, lined with the soft feathers of arctic swallows.

She never likes to climb down chimneys. That is why you will never see her on Christmas Eve, no matter how late you stay up, and no matter how much you try to peek from beneath the bed-covers when you hear the delightful and the prancing of reindeer hooves.

The dear lady always said to Santa Claus, "I dislike chimneys. Besides, I want to be here with a hot supper for you when you return after delivering the toys."

"Thank you, my dear," Santa would say, very pleased. But one day, Mrs. Santa said, "Just the same I would like to peep in at some of the dear, sleeping children you visit on Christmas Eve."

"You can always look through my telescope," said Old Santa. The telescope that is one thing you probably did not know about. Did you? Santa Claus has a giant telescope by putting one eye to it, because it is a magic telescope, he can look down from the North Pole and see little children all over the world. It is no problem at all for him

to see little boys and girls in Ireland, or America, or Italy, or Poland, or France, or South America—or anywhere. He can even hear what they are saying, as well as watch what they are doing.

Sometimes Mrs. Santa Claus saw him shed a tear as he looked down at some poor child who had no toys at all. Some little child who would kneel beside his bedside and pray that Santa would bring him even so small a gift as a pair of warm mittens.

But there were times when even Santa could not make up his mind whether a child was very good or very naughty. And this is what he would do. He would swing the big telescope away from earth, and point it upward at the sky, through his magic glass he could see into the starry Heavens far, far above us all.

house. And she began to cry. "Oh! Oh!" cried Santa Claus, very disturbed. "What is troubling you, my dear?"

"Look!" cried Mrs. Santa Claus, wiping away the tears. "Look down there. See that poor child. She looks cold and lonely and hungry. See how she rubs her poor little hands together to keep them warm."

Now Santa put his own eye to the telescope and looked down. "I know who she is," he said. "Her mother is ill, and her father has had poor luck with his fishing. It is very sad. There is no money, and little food in the house. I can see them gathering bayberry-ticks to build a fire and keep themselves warm."

"But I cannot come down to Cape Cod on my own," said Mrs. Santa. "The poor child needs help now. We must do something at once."

"But you know how you dislike chimneys," said Santa. "I will go down the chimney," said Mrs. Santa. "I'll go through the bedroom window while she is asleep, and I'll look her back here before anyone knows it."

Santa said, "All right, my dear, I'll watch you through the telescope." "By the way," asked Mrs. Santa, "what is the child's name?"

"Just call her Jane," said Mrs. Santa. "Everyone calls her that." "She looks so handsome," said Mrs. Santa. "I wouldn't be surprised if she were my own little girl."

"Well, my dear, be happy," said Mrs. Santa. "Just remember me here tonight."

When the next morn Mrs. Santa Claus hitched two very fast reindeer to the sleigh. Then she got in and covered herself with a big white bear rug. The reindeer dug their hooves into the white snow and galloped away across the face of the moon and soared over the mountains and across the sea to where the lonely little girl, named Jane, lived in the fishing village on old Cape Cod.

All this time, of course, Santa Claus could see his wife through the magic telescope. He saw her arrive in town. He watched her tie the reindeer to a picket fence, shake the snow off her boots, and climb through the bedroom window where the child, Jane, was sleeping.

And he heard her say, "Wake up, Jane darling." "Who are you?" asked Jane, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes.

"Sh-h-h!" said Mrs. Santa Claus. "You don't know me, but I have come to take you for a visit to the land of the Christmas Toys—would you like that?"

"Oh, yes indeed!" said the child. "Wrap yourself up warmly," said Mrs. Santa Claus. Then she helped Jane with her coat, her dress, and her shoes, and she laid her put on a woolen jacket. It was tattered and old, and so tattered that she was afraid it would not keep the child warm.

Then the child and Mrs. Santa Claus quiet as two mice climbed out of the window and into the sleigh. The reindeer tossed their horns and stamped their feet in the snow.

When Mrs. Santa Claus cried, "Away! Away!" the reindeer were off in no time at all they had crossed the tip of Cape Cod, passed over Plymouth Rock, and were galloping above the clouds to Christmas Land.



And said to Jane "My name is GREYWHISTLE. I make all the Christmas toys."

Jane shook her head with a frown and watched as he pressed a button which made all the little trains run back and forth around the tracks. Such a whistling! Such a rattling!

This was no sooner over than up stepped a little woman not much bigger than a hat box. "This is MISS DOLLY," said Mrs. Santa. "She is in charge of making all our dolls."

Before Jane could say anything she heard another voice behind her crying. "Don't forget me!"

Jane looked around and there standing beside her was a young lady about the size of a small boy. She had a big sash hanging from her belt and a ruffled and hooded and a pair of stockings in her hair.

Mrs. Santa Claus said, "Jane, my dear, I want you to meet MISS SALLY THIMBLE. She is our doll-maker, and Miss Sally Thimble took Jane and showed her all the new dolls they were making and showing that day."

"Would you like one?" Santa asked Jane. "Oh, yes please," answered Jane.

Jane got her back on an one she wanted. She chose a doll with a blue evening dress, a permanent wave, a pair of slippers, and eyes that twinkled. As Jane was standing, holding the new doll, up walked a roly-poly little man who said, "I'm DREWSTICK. He had the best nose and ears, and a host of very good hair."

Jane said, "I'd like to meet you DREWSTICK!"

Without any invitation the little man reached for a drum and began to play. "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!" It was a marching song.

Who should come next, but SHOOTING PEPE. He helped Santa make all the pistols and guns. He rushed in and fired off both his pistols. "Bang! Bang!" such noise. At the sound of the shooting, a galloped a little man on a brown and white pony. He was dressed as a soldier. "WHOA! WHOA!" cried the man. "What's going on here?"

"It's only our friend THE MAJOR," Santa laughed. "When he heard the shooting he thought a war had started."

He makes all our toy soldiers," said Mrs. Santa. "He also makes Indians, cowboys, and spacemen. He is very good at it."

But in the midst of all this happiness Jane's face became very sad. She tugged at Santa's sleeve and pleaded, "Please, sir, would you mind if I take my doll to a poor little girl friend of mine when I get back home?"

"Why, my dear child," exclaimed Mrs. Santa Claus. "How sweet of you! But that won't be necessary. I'll give you another doll to take to your friend."

"Thank you! Thank you!" said Jane, tears of gladness in her eyes.

After that Jane, Santa and Mrs. Santa walked all through the wonderful shops, looking at the toys Jane met FOOT A TOOT, the little dwarf who made all the bugles and horns.

And she met TING-A-LING, the very small dwarf, who made all the bicycle bells and horns.

And she met SWEELEKALE, who made ice cream cones, the roller skates and the ice skates. She was a darling little lady who never went about anywhere in the shop except on roller skates. But what she was different! She was the champion ice skater at the North Pole.

When they were finished looking around Santa took Jane and Mrs. Santa into his office where the big telescope was.

"I want you to meet some one who loves you very much," he said to Jane.

"Who?" asked Jane very curious.

"You'll see," said Mrs. Santa. "Just put your eye to the telescope, and you will soon find out."

Santa swung the big telescope up into the sky, to the place where Heaven is.

"Look child," Santa said to Jane. Jane looked and said, "I see Angels—hundreds of Angels!"

"Look again," said Mrs. Santa. "Who do you see now?"

"I see a lovely lady dressed in blue," Jane replied. "Everyone is bowing to her. And she is waving to me."

"You know who that is, of course," said Santa. "Oh, yes. It is Our Lady of Heaven."

"Now, look again," said Mrs. Santa. "Who do you see now?"

But Jane did not reply. She just kept looking and looking. But Mrs. Santa Claus knew the One she saw. She waited as Jane's eyes like bright stars, looked and looked through the magic telescope.

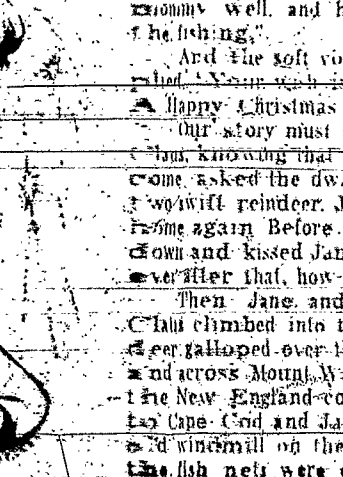
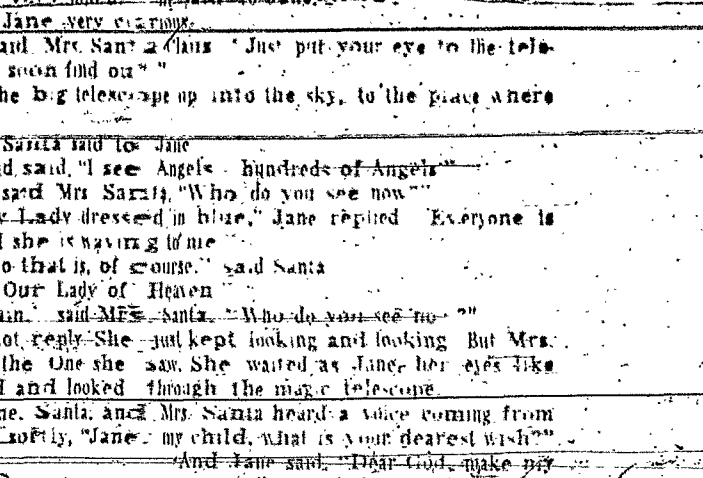
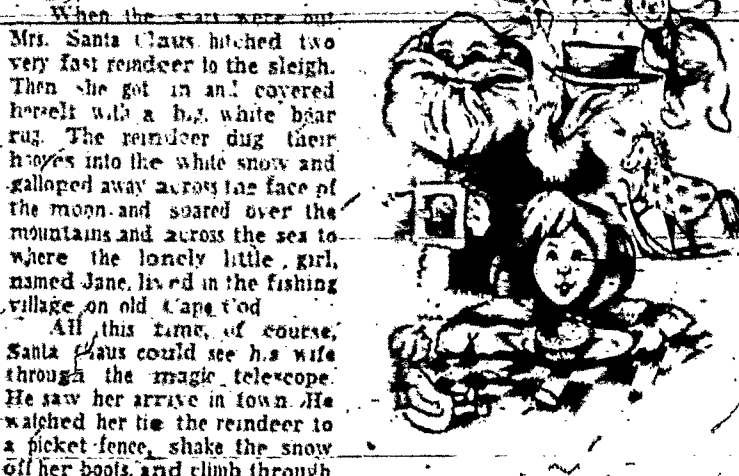
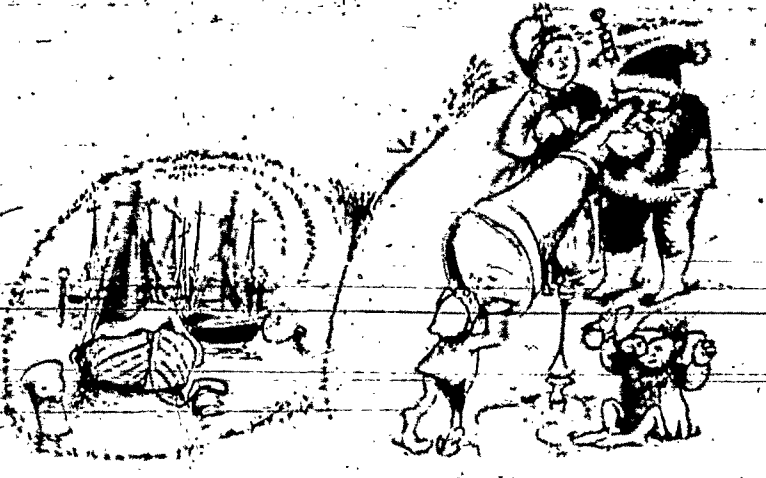
All at once Jane, Santa, and Mrs. Santa heard a voice coming from the sky and saying softly, "Jane—my child, what is your dearest wish?"

And Jane said, "I wish to be a fisherman's boy, and help my daddy with the fishing."

And the soft voice from the sky replied, "Your wish is granted, my child. Happy Christmas to you."

Our story must end now. Mrs. Santa, knowing that morning, could soon come asked the dwarfs to hitch up the reindeer. Jane had to be taken home again. Before they left, Santa bent down and kissed Jane. She remembered, ever after that, how his whiskers tickled.

Then Jane and Mrs. Santa Claus climbed into the sleigh. The reindeer galloped over the Green Mountains and across Mount Washington, and down the New England coast until they came to Cape Cod and Jane's house near the old windmill on the sand dunes where the fish nets were drying in the air.



WISHING YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

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